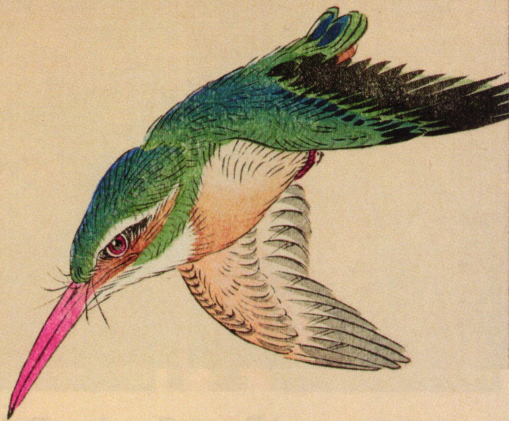




Birding in the Galleries

Now that you've brushed up on your bird identification skills in *For the Birds*, use this guide to find more birds in the Museum's galleries. Many of these birds play symbolic roles in the works of art that feature them.





A



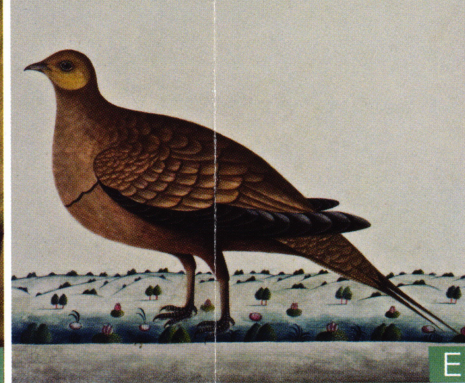
B



C



D



E



F

A:: Gallery 32 Albert Carrier-Belleuse (French, 1824–1887), *Hebe and the Eagle of Jupiter*, 1858

In ancient Roman mythology, Jupiter, king of the Olympian gods, had a great golden eagle, king of the birds, as his messenger and animal companion. In this silvered bronze sculpture, Hebe, daughter of Jupiter and his wife Juno, performs her duty as cupbearer to the gods by offering ambrosia—a drink that reinforced the Olympians’ immortality—to the eagle. The image offers a contrast between the innocence and delicacy of Hebe and the powerful and dangerous aspects of the bird of prey.

B:: Gallery 32 , Sèvres Factory, *Pair of Vases with Fables* by Jean de La Fontaine, 1866

The Fables of Jean de La Fontaine (French, 1621–1695) have been enormously popular, particularly in French culture, since they were first published from 1668 to 1694. Like his model Aesop, many of La Fontaine’s fables feature animals and explore various social and political foibles of humanity. This pair of elaborate 19th-century vases alludes to two fables that prominently feature a heron—one foolish, the other merely acting according to its nature.

C:: Gallery 28 French, Savonnerie Carpet Factory, *Wall Panels: Winter and Summer*, about 1730

The two tapestries in this gallery feature objects representing winter and summer. Above a vase of flowers and plants, a cartouche frames a bird or birds that relate to the season. Swallows herald the summer (as in, “One swallow does not a summer make”), while an owl—possibly a tawny owl—presides over the winter panel. Many species of owls overwinter in their breeding territory rather than migrating to warmer climes, making them appropriate avian symbols of the season.

D:: Gallery 29 John Singleton Copley (American, 1738–1815), *Young Lady with a Bird and Dog*, 1767

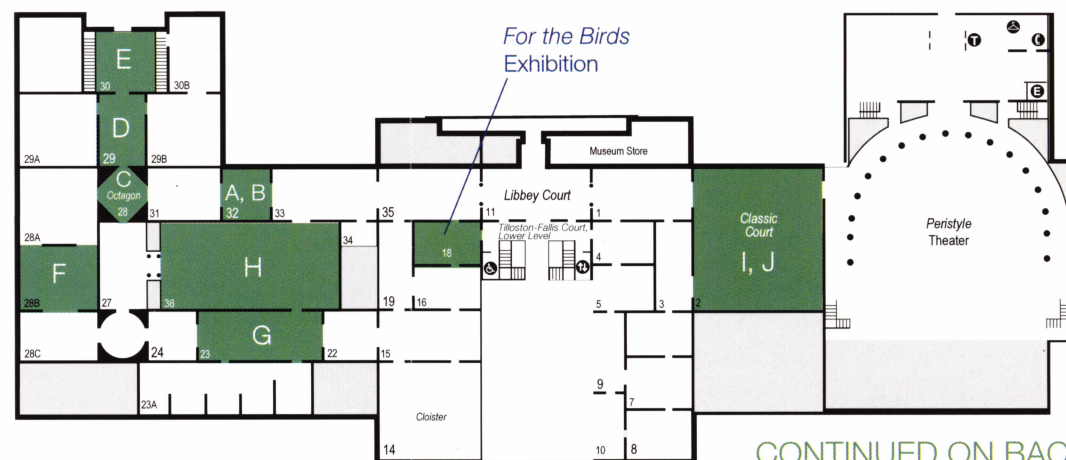
Since the West’s first encounters with parrots of Asia, Africa, and the Americas during the Age of Exploration, these colorful, exotic birds were seen as status symbols in Europe and, later, in Colonial America. Copley’s portrait of a well-heeled little girl includes what appears to be a red-headed lovebird, a parrot native to Africa.

E:: Gallery 30 Indian, Company School, probably Lucknow, *A Hen Pheasant*, about 1820

Fascinated by the exotic birds, animals, and plants they encountered in India, officers of the British East India Company commissioned descriptive watercolors of unfamiliar species from Indian painters. India has more than 45 species of pheasants and related birds like partridges and quails, including the stunning peacock. The hen pheasant represented here is of a plainer variety, though the artist has carefully delineated its feathers and the bird’s subtle speckles.

F:: Gallery 28B French, Sèvres Factory, *Pieces from the Rohan Service*, about 1771–72

The splendidly painted (if fancifully colored) exotic birds on these pieces from the porcelain Rohan dessert service are attributed to Louis-Denis Armand, an artist who worked with the Sèvres Porcelain Manufactory from 1745 to 1788. He was the highest-paid and most skilled bird painter at Sèvres, and probably based his subjects on the prints in George Edward’s 1743 publication *A Natural History of Birds*.



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G:: Gallery 23 Melchoir d'Hondecoeter (Dutch, 1636–1695), *Poultry in a Landscape*, 1600s

Although widely bred in Europe by the 17th century, the turkey was native to North America, while the breed of crested chicken in this painting originally came from the East. For a prosperous Dutch art lover who would probably have displayed such a painting in his country house, the exotic breeds may have evoked the widespread trade and colonies of the Dutch Republic in the 1600s.

H:: Great Gallery Jacob Jordaens (Flemish, 1593–1678), *Adam and Eve*, about 1645–50

The birds depicted in this image of Adam and Eve committing Original Sin by disobeying God underline the meaning and consequences of the scene. The parrots—including a green wing macaw on the left—were associated with the Madonna (the redemptive “Second Eve”) because of the belief that the Immaculate Conception occurred through the spoken word of God (parrots having the ability to talk). The crested bird on the right is a hoopoe, known in folklore as a filthy bird that fouled its own nest—an appropriate metaphor for the sin of Adam and Eve. The hoopoe confronts what appears to be a common kingfisher, a bird associated with the Resurrection of Christ (the redemptive “Second Adam”). The bullfinch flying above Adam has likely been conflated with the European goldfinch, a symbol of the Crucifixion.



I:: Classic Court Roman (probably from Tunisia), *Mosaic with Bacchus*, about 140–160 CE

Among the images in the elaborate border surrounding the central portrait of Bacchus, Roman god of wine, theater, and ritual ecstasy, are four doves (possibly turtle doves). Doves were symbols of the fertility aspect of Bacchus. Doves are thought to be the first birds domesticated by humans, and were associated with the regenerative powers of early mother goddesses like Ishtar and Astarte, an association that carried over into the classical world with the bird's connection to Bacchus and to Venus, goddess of love and lust.

J:: Classic Court Egyptian, *Horus*, Ptolemaic Dynasty, 305–30 BCE

This falcon represents the god Horus, who was believed to be the manifestation of the living pharaoh of Egypt. It is most likely the lanner falcon, whose distinctive facial markings inspired the design of the iconic wedjat or “Eye of Hours” protective amulet.

There are many more birds to be found throughout the Museum's galleries than the ones presented in this guide. How many can you identify?

Cover:
Ohara Shoson (Japanese, 1878–1945), *Kingfisher and Iris* (detail).
Color woodblock print, 1926. Gift of Hubert D. Bennett, 1939.260